

# *The Midland*

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## **Out of the Desert**

By WILLARD WATTLES

Out of this little and this nothingness  
I will build slowly what cannot be effaced;  
There shall come sound of iron hammers ringing  
And groining arches like fingers interlaced;  
Each youth a king who walks a common kingdom,  
Clad in the seamless robe, with lifted head,  
Each girl a queen, love's roses in her bosom,  
Walking beside him with an equal tread.  
I will set song upon the lips of singers  
Who slumber still uncalled from out the dust,  
I will light fires upon unnumbered altars,  
Love shall be honest and justice shall be just.  
I have not cried alone within the desert,  
Ye go not out to find a broken reed;  
I have clasped Him who walks the pillared darkness—  
I have not wrestled with Him feeble-kneed.

About my loins I gird a sword that flashes  
With lightnings hidden in the marching cloud;  
I break above your heads the awful tablets,  
And fling the fragments to the wheeling crowd.  
Out of such sowing shall come mighty reaping:  
Hearts are the fields, and songs the seed I sow;  
Ye shall not know until the time of harvest  
What hand upheld me, but I know, I know.

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### Heart of Youth

BY WALTER J. MUILENBURG.

The boy on the cultivator straightened as the horses walked from the soft, spongy ground of the corn-field to the firmer turf at the side of the road. He spoke sharply to the plodding team and turned the cultivator around, lowering the blades for another row. Then, when the horses had fallen into a slow walk, he slouched down, and with bent head watched the hills of young corn pass beneath him.

He could not have been more than sixteen or seventeen, for his eager eyes looked out from under soft lashes, and his face showed the smooth, healthy tan of a boy. His brown hands were so small that he could barely keep a firm grasp on the heavy levers. When he raised the blades, his fingers became streaked with red and the corners of his mouth

drew back and grew hard with concentrated effort. Occasionally he tugged at the reins knotted about his shoulders, but, except for his low, abrupt commands to the horses, he was silent. At the end of the row he raised the shovels, got off the cultivator stiffly, and stretched himself out in the new spring grass of a little rise by the roadside.

All around him the world was full of soft color and light. Close by, in the sun the corn-field was a sea of shimmering green, while the more distant fields of grain were dark against the light ash of plowed land. Above, the sun shone slanting from the blue of an early June sky. The air, clean and clear, was already pervaded with the drowsy lassitude of noon.

The boy looked listlessly out over the long rows of corn still to be cultivated. Near at hand the young stalks seemed strong enough to win in their struggle toward the sun, but the distant corn lay like a filmy shadow of green on the black soil. Behind the cultivator, a flock of blackbirds fed in the fresh-turned earth. The boy watched them with half-shut eyes. When one of the birds had fed, it would hop upon a lump of wet, black earth, and being satisfied that it could eat no more, would skim in rapid, undulating flight to the row of willows in the next pasture. On a fence-post, a meadow-lark filled the silence with a liquid flow of music. As it laid back its head in an abandon of joy, the boy noticed how the sun accentuated the vivid splash of black on its yellow throat.

The meadow-lark flew away. The boy got up and climbed listlessly into the cultivator seat. The tugs straightened and the horses walked again into the corn. One of the team, however, a heavy, powerful bay, lagged continually, at times almost stopping.

The cultivator slid sidewise, and the blades tore the corn out by the roots. The boy jerked the reins, slapping them over the horse's back. "Get along there, Jim!" he called. Jim pulled evenly for a moment, then lagged again. In sudden violence of anger, the boy pulled cruelly at the horse's mouth, cursing in low, abrupt sentences. The horse stopped, the blades slipped, again tearing up a hill of corn. From sheer rage the boy was silent, then he jumped from the cultivator, and gathering the slack of the reins, hit the horse about the head with all his might. His face was dry and white, his eyes blazing. As he continued to strike the horse, he found expression.

"You damn, lazy brute, you! I'll show you who's running this job—you or me!" His words came sharply, in gasps, between blows. Then he cursed again; cursed the work and the horse. Fine lines of fatigue showed in his face. At last he stopped. A slight color had come to his cheeks. For a moment he watched the horse, which stood with muscles moving in quivering ripples of pain and fear; then he walked soberly back and climbed upon the cultivator seat. The horses moved on. They walked evenly now, starting at any movement of the boy,

who stared steadily at the swiftly moving ground, two red spots still burning through the tan of his cheeks.

They went once across the field. On the return, the boy stopped impetuously by the road and jumping down from the seat walked to the horse he had beaten. The horse quivered and shied toward its mate. The boy stroked its neck.

"Whoa, Jim! Whoa, boy!" he repeated.

He hesitated a moment, then went across the road to the meadow and picked an armful of young tufts of clover. He fed it to the horses, a handful at a time. They ate eagerly, all trace of fear gone as they reached out their necks for the young grass. Over the boy's face passed a conflict of expressions. At one time the cheeks were soft, and a boyish look lay in his eyes. Then came a strange, dry expression, as of age, which formed tense lines about his mouth; but as he climbed up to the seat of the cultivator, the softer expression remained.

The horses were beginning to draw at the tugs when the boy heard a horse galloping on the road behind him. He looked back. One of the neighbor boys, Bill Symonds, was riding furiously down the hill. The boy turned quickly about in the seat as if he had not seen Bill and tried to hurry the horses. What did Bill want, anyway? It was like him to blunder along when he wasn't wanted! His big, greasy face shaded by the long hair falling unkempt over his forehead had always made the boy dislike Bill. He tightened the reins.

"Hey, Frank, wait a minute!" Bill slid awkwardly from the colt's back.

The boy twisted the reins about the levers and turned in the seat.

"How are you, Bill," he answered without animation.

Bill tied the colt, a bay, to the willows.

"Well, what do you think of my new colt?" He came closer and lounged forward against the fence. "I broke him in myself—all alone too! Now, that was a job, Lord! You ought t' seen him buckin' an' standin' on his hind legs!"

They were silent for a moment. Bill amused himself by flinging clods at the colt, which jumped wildly each time one struck him, his body quivering, his eyes white and distended.

After a few clods Bill turned to the boy.

"I guess maybe I'll be leavin' soon."

The boy looked up quickly.

"Yep, I'm goin' off to my brother's ranch in Dakota. I'm gettin' tired of the work here—it's too hard. It's work, work, work all the time with a little while for eatin' and sleepin'. All summer you c'n work your head off and then in winter you can lay off for a couple of months and don't know what to do."

The boy looked out over the fields. Even Bill could go away. The heavy, flabby cheeks, from which the small eyes peered inquisitively, disgusted the boy.

Bill picked up another bit of turf and threw it so that the colt jumped wildly, pulling the young willows almost to the ground.

The boy turned to Bill, his face flushed.

"Say—if you want to stay around here you got to cut out firing stones at that colt. You'll never get 'im tame that way—you thick-headed fool!"

Bill stood quiet for a moment. The boy saw an expression of incredulous surprise on Bill's face. Then it became brick-red. He did not wait for Bill to answer but started the horses.

When he looked back, Bill was riding away over the top of the hill, his body swaying with the rhythm of the gallop. The boy was glad that Bill was angry. He didn't want people around. And besides, why did Bill have a chance to go away? His eyes grew hot.

The morning passed slowly. When finally the shadow of the cottonwood tree at the corner of the pasture pointed directly to the north, the boy unhitched, cleaned the cultivator shovels carefully with a handful of grass, and placed them upon the hooks. With the reins about his back, he trudged up the long slope of the hill, through the warm dust, swinging his water-pail in cadence with his steps. They reached the top of the hill. The house was only a short distance from the road. He could see his father carrying a basket of wood to the house. He hoped that his father would not come and help him unharness the horses. He wanted to be alone;

he dreaded facing their conversation at the dinner-table. His eyes grew hot again. Everything was so old to him! He always came home just at dinner time, his father always worked about the barn, finishing work a little before so that he might help unharness the horses. And dinner was always ready when they came in the house. The boy kicked a clod viciously.

At the water trough he stopped and the thirsty horses drank deeply. His father came out of the barn, a pitchfork in his hand, and sat down on the edge of the trough, fanning himself with his hat. The boy noticed that his father seemed more tired than usual. His brown hair was already mixed with grey and was damp where the hat had rested. His eyes seemed less cheerful than usual, and his face less red.

When the horses raised their heads from the trough, the boy led them to their stalls. His father followed him.

"How was cultivatin', Frank?" he asked as he stepped into the barn.

"Oh, it wasn't bad."

"The ground was pretty hard, wasn't it?"

"Not very."

In silence they unharnessed the horses, which buried their heads in the newly-cut hay and blew the fragrant, spicy dust from their nostrils. As the boy unloosed the collar of his horse, it slipped and fell upon his foot. His face writhed in a flash of tem-



per and he began cursing in a low tone, heavily and deliberately. Then he picked up the collar and struck the horse. Under lowered eyelashes he saw his father stand in the doorway, his face white with repressed anger. The boy stopped suddenly. He had never seen his father look like that before. He heard him turn in the doorway.

The horses fed, they walked through the hot, deserted farm-yard to the house. As they entered the shaded living-room, his mother came from the kitchen, humming a bit of tune. Her eyes lit up when she saw them. She talked cheerfully as she worked. The boy said nothing. He seemed to be looking out of the open window into the orchard; instead, through his lowered eyelashes, he followed his mother's movements about the room as she set the small table for three, still humming as she worked. The boy saw that she stopped often to cough. This was not unusual, but once the cough became so strong that it left her face colorless. Uneasily sympathetic, he noted that after this she did not hum again. Whenever she looked his way, the boy turned his head, not so soon but that he could see and feel the half-fearful appeal that darkened her eyes.

After the glasses had been filled, the three drew up to the table. The dinner was eaten in silence. The eyes of the boy constantly returned to his mother's face. Somehow she seemed different to-day. He wished that she didn't wear that black

dress, it made her face look too white and her eyes too large and bright. He ate rapidly. Why didn't his father and mother talk? They used to tease him about one of the neighbor girls. But they had not for a long time now. He wondered why. Why didn't they say something? It was too still.

As soon as he had finished his meal, he drank the water left in his glass and pushed back his chair. His mother looked quickly at his father. The boy watched them closely and uneasily. Both seemed to be shrinking from something. His father carefully folded and unfolded his newspaper. Then he laid it beside his plate and cleared his throat. He turned in his chair.

"Wait a minute, Frank," he spoke with hesitation.

The boy turned, looked at his father a moment, and then sat down.

"I don't think we'll cultivate this afternoon, Frank," his father commenced slowly.

"Why—" The boy started to speak but stopped. He saw the frightened grayness return to his mother's face. His father, too, seemed restless. He crossed and recrossed his knees nervously.

"Well, Frank," he continued, "it's this way. Your Ma ain't been feelin' well for quite a while and we rode over to the doctor's this morning to see what was the matter."

His mother had gone back of his chair. He could feel her hand on his shoulders. He turned half-

round, his hands grasping the chair tightly.

"You musn't be scared, Frank—the doctor said it wasn't so very bad."

He could feel her twining his hair about her fingers.

He turned, faced his mother silently, half afraid, as though some grim barrier stood between them. He saw fine lines about her gray eyes, and their color seemed heavy and faded. The boy sat staring at his mother with an intensity that made a color come to her cheeks, but he was not looking at her any more. Instead, he was wondering fiercely why he had never noticed the gray in her hair or the lines in her face, or the cough. The cough—surely he might have noticed that. His body lay limp against the back of the chair.

"The doctor said that Ma was pretty sick," his father was speaking on, his voice devoid of life or feeling. "But he said that she 'ud be all right if she went some place where the air was drier."

"What did he say it was?" he asked in a strained voice.

"It's her lungs, he says."

They were silent after this. He was looking out of the window at a far-away straw-stack which lay a mass of dull gold in the sombre setting of plowed land.

His mother still stood behind his chair. In the heavy silence of the room he could hear her uneven breathing. He heard his father turn in his chair.

"Well, Mother's got to go west—we might all of us go," he spoke with an attempt at cheerfulness. "Maybe we can work a small farm out there."

"What will we do with the farm here?" As she spoke the boy felt his mother's hand press more heavily on his shoulder. He turned from the window and caught his father's eyes looking at him. He saw his face flush.

"I guess we got to sell it. I can get a fair price. Help is scarce and rent's low since the dry years. We can't afford to rent it."

Again the boy caught his father's glance resting hopefully on him.

"But we can't sell the old place; we have worked it too long."

The boy was uneasily conscious of the break in his mother's voice. He sat up, his body stiffened. Did they expect him to stay on the farm? He wouldn't—he could not do that! They had no right to ask this of him. But he remembered the quick hope in his father's eyes.

He got up from his chair, walked past his mother without looking at her, picked up his hat and went outside, closing the screen-door noiselessly behind him.

The earth slept warm in the drowsiness of early afternoon. The freshness of the morning had passed and a languorous mist had fallen. The boy looked out to where earth and sky met in a haze of indefinable color. What a wonderful earth was beyond!

He turned and walked heavily away. They hadn't any right to expect that!

Half-unconsciously he went toward the grove north of the house where he had played when he was a little boy. The neighbor boys would collect in the grove on a quiet summer afternoon, dressed as Indians, and in heavy seriousness would plan a desperate attack on the little white house with its green trimmings. What happy times they used to have! But he wasn't a boy any more, he had grown up; still he felt an expectant eagerness as he entered the cool shade of the trees.

He followed a path, indistinct now in the rank growth of gooseberry bushes, until he reached his destination. A tree, broken off a couple of feet from the ground, had left a high stump with some ragged splinters, serving as the back of a natural chair.

The boy sat for a while, leaning back with lowered eyelashes. The dim spaces of the grove brought old memories. As he brooded there, relaxed, the sunlight coming in broken fragments through the oak leaves softened his face into almost that of a child.

Suddenly he straightened in desperate rebellion. Why did things have to happen so? He didn't want to grow older—he would rather be a boy. If he were, his father and mother would not expect him to stay on the farm. With his reflections came the picture of his mother, her dark eyes shining unnaturally out of the rigid paleness of her face. Then the black dress with its long folds—it was horrible. The boy's

thoughts blurred into a confusion of sharp emotions.

As he lay back again, with lowered eyelids, he was vaguely conscious of the life about him. Robins hopped from branch to branch, singing and chirping. A blue-jay, in a cracked crescendo, was attacking the established order of things among birds. A bee droned idly past. Occasionally all sounds ceased, and silence, deep and impenetrable, seemed to close in. After a moment, the confused murmur of the woods began again.

In the underbrush near him, the boy became aware of a fluttering noise. At first he could see nothing; then he saw a snake—a blue racer—writhing along the ground, while above it, making queer little noises of distress, hovered a brown wood-thrush. He stiffened. His flesh always crawled at the sight of a snake! Yet, leaning forward, he watched intently. The thrush, its body a blur of brown feathers, rose and fell in continuous attack. Then he saw the reason. A few yards from the tree-stump lay a nest, hidden in a clump of gooseberry bushes. Above the rim showed a circle of hungry gaping beaks. The snake was crawling steadily toward the nest.

It was almost there. The thrush became wild in fear for its young. Again and again its body flashed in silent deadly attack. The snake, rearing its head from the ground, its jaws wide, struck back at the fluttering terror above it.

The snake reached the nest. It writhed over the edge. With a quick, sharp note the bird flung itself

upon its enemy. A blur of brown feathers and a glimpse of a twisting, bluish body were all that the boy could see. A moment, and the snake writhed out from the nest. The thrush lay on the ground, blood crimsoning the speckled white of its breast. Its wings fluttered slightly, then the body was still.

The boy leaned back against the trunk and closed his eyes. He released his breath sharply. His throat contracted so that he almost choked. He had always had a horror of seeing a creature maimed or killed. He felt it doubly now, and he might have helped the bird,—no one else could. Yet it was only a bird; such things happened continually—they had to be: but he could not forget the flutterings of the dying thrush. Then, suddenly, he remembered his mother.

After a long time, he opened his eyes. The trees, the sky,—all the country was asleep; the absolute tranquillity of space lay lightly in the air and bathed the earth with a drowsy light. And the boy yielded himself to the silence. His eyes mirrored the mystic, reflective mood of the afternoon.

In the west, ragged clouds massed together and spread over the sky, their long streamers, black where they reached the sun, darkening the earth with the gray, misty twilight of the storm. Then a cool breeze sprang up, the clouds receded, and the sun shone out.

The boy became conscious that it was late and jumped down from his seat. He felt strangely

cheerful. The confused emotions which had raged in him all the afternoon had spent themselves, and he whistled as he walked on between the trees. When he turned into the lane near the house, he could see, in the west, a few black masses of cloud, vivid against the crimson flame of the sky—wandering spirits in an infinity of lonely space.

At the windmill he stopped and looked toward the house. The kitchen was lighted; the rest of the house was dark and shadowy. A thin spiral of smoke twisted up until it became lost in the gray light. How home-like it all was! The boy walked quickly toward the house, took the milk pails from the hooks on the porch and went into the barn. The horses did not raise their heads from the grain as he entered. The sound of their crunching, the sweet smell of the hay, seemed part of the pervading rest and content about him. His father came up from the gloom of the barn, carrying a pail of milk. He glanced at the boy.

"I thought I'd do the chores tonight, son. You don't get a vacation very often. You ought to rest."

"Oh!" The boy felt sudden embarrassment. He had a queer pity for his father. He almost wished that he could have done the chores himself.

It was dark as they walked slowly to the house. In the dusk of the east, the moon appeared red on the rim of the horizon. Everything seemed asleep, yet infinite life still vibrated through its sleep. Out of the oak-grove sounded the hopeless lament of the



turtle-dove, voicing the mystery and sadness of the night. From the farm to the north came the faint cry of someone calling the cows, "Co-o, boss; co-o, boss!" A moment, the boy felt as though it were the wonder and music of the horizon that called. Then he smiled at the idea.

His father stopped on the porch. The boy knew what his father was thinking, knew with a wave of pity and understanding. It seemed to him there, in the darkness, that suddenly he was able to comprehend the shadows which he had not known before in his boyish dream of life.

He took off his hat. The night wind was cool. How intense the night was! Nature seemed a living and beautiful power, ever-veiled but always near. For a moment his father rested his hand upon the boy's shoulder. The boy moved closer to him.

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### **The Ballad of Mona Lisa**

BY S. H. M. BYERS

Again Giocunda's wife had gone  
To the accustomed place  
Where the great master should retouch  
The picture of her face.

Three years had Mona Lisa sat  
To the great Florentine;  
And yet the picture was not done;  
Again the fields are green.

They are alone; the greatest soul  
In Italy—and she,  
No rose and lily all in one  
So beautiful could be.

She smiled: "This is my day you know,  
It suits my face; and here,  
The little clouds that come and go,  
Are your loved atmosphere.

"For Leonardo, look, the mists  
Across the Arno rest;  
And days like these, you always said,  
You painted me the best."

Day in, day out, had he not sought  
Some mystery to trace?  
Some thing no artist yet had caught,  
The soul behind her face?

Her face with each emotion changed,  
Some new enchantment wore;  
And once, a longing look was hers  
That was not hers before.

Day in, day out, he painted on,  
And all so tenderly,  
Knew all her thoughts, save that great one  
He was too blind to see.

Each held a secret neither told—  
To realms of love the key;  
Yet neither dared the door unfold  
To love's great ecstasy.

Entrancing music was her voice,—  
Soft as the murm'ring firs:  
She did not know that listening there  
His soul passed into hers.

Again she smiled, and gave her hand,  
He kissed it in farewell,  
And saw in her entreating eyes  
The thing she dared not tell.

He too nor dared, nor spoke, nor knew  
That moment was his doom;  
As in a dream his tongue was fast:  
She slowly left the room.

Transfixed, he waited there, and long  
Gazed on his canvas fair,  
And gazing saw the broken heart  
He had not known was there.

Days passed, and absence only lent  
Some new grief to the old:  
The sorrowing, mad'ning discontent  
Of love that is not told.

Far, far, he wandered by the sea  
As by a phantom led,  
But ever in his soul there burned  
The words he should have said.

"I will go back," he thought, at last,  
"I shall have courage yet,"  
And turned his face to that dear spot  
Where first their souls had met.

Too late: where winds the Arno down  
To meet the blue sea wave,  
They told him where to find the stone  
That marked her lowly grave.

But in a palace by the Seine,  
In gilded halls of state,  
There Mona Lisa's picture hangs  
Among the fair and great.

And strangers, ling'ring long, will look,  
Chained by the master's spell,  
On one whom Leonardo loved,  
Yet never dared to tell.

## **The Philosopher in Fairyland**

By ROGER L. SERGEL

The Philosopher shifted in his cavernous easy chair and recrossed his lean legs. The firelight into which he abstractedly gazed leapt and drooped to catch his attention, but the Philosopher might just as well have been looking at one of the gloomy corners of the room for all the good the fire's anxious vanity did. Between the fluttering shadows the Philosopher's lean yellow face indicated his darkly pensive mood. Occasionally he raised his eyebrows, throwing a series of concentric arches over the surface of his cliff-like forehead. Again he recrossed his long legs, ran his fingers through his sparse iron-grey hair and touched his moustache nervously. Then quickly he turned his head to the right, for someone had softly, yet distinctly, entered the room.

An indefinite radiance danced toward him, and a little girl flung herself at his feet, clinging to his legs.

"Philosopher," she piped, "come out, come out; the grass is under a sheen of dew, and puffy clouds are chasing each other across the sky in the west—like elephants in a parade, and the air, the air is washed with moonlight. Come out, Philosopher, come out!"

"But Girl, here the lovely fire is glowing, and it is, perhaps,—a little chilly out-doors."

"O Philosopher! you know that isn't it, you know

that you don't see the fire; you just see your old thoughts!"

"But Girl," rejoined the Philosopher, taking the Girl on his knees, "perhaps the thoughts need attention; perhaps they are beautiful as the clouds are, and the moon-lit air."

"No, no, Philosopher, not to-night. To-night only the outside is beautiful. Come out, Philosopher."

"Well, but not for long." And the Philosopher rose, towering far above the Girl, and taking one step to the Girl's three, stalked toward the door, where their forms melted into the dark.

In a minute they appeared on the wide veranda from which the dew-gleaming lawns dropped away and rose again to the misty and tree-obscured horizon. The Philosopher stood still a moment looking at the vast clouds in the west, just above which a full moon shone, keenly outlined. As the Philosopher gazed, the moon was rapidly clipped away and hidden by a giant cloud, and all was heavily dark; but soon the cloud had passed, the moon arose triumphant, and all the land broke into misty bloom again.

The Girl had tripped down the steps and was skipping to the left toward a double clump of trees, crying as she went, "Philosopher! Philosopher! this way, this way, Philosopher!"

The Philosopher walked meditatively after her, raising troubled eyes to the star-brilliant heavens. The Girl had made a detour among some low shrubs and now came fitting back to him.

"Hurry, Philosopher," she cried a little impatiently, "I want to see the Fairy of the Fountain to-night."

"But that's too far, isn't it?" the Philosopher asked gravely.

"Oh no,—not if we hurry a little. Come on—"

And they entered an aisle, open about a third of its width to the sky, the rest being overhung with low-bowed branches of maples on either side. Swiftly the Girl ran down the long aisle, the Philosopher following some distance behind, his eyes beginning to grow less grave as he watched the far vision of the Girl and was soothed beneath the full-bosomed and motherly trees. Far ahead a dim light glimmered, at which the Girl had almost arrived. The Philosopher threw back his head, plunged his hands in his coat pockets, and began a vigorous walk after her.

The pale liquescence of the light soon took shape, as the Philosopher strode rapidly on beneath the trees, and became round and steady in form beneath its surface shimmer. From the center rose a tall lily-white object, vaguely discerned as a fountain under its enveloping and glistening nebulosity. As the Philosopher emerged from the tunnel of trees, the Girl, dancing around in the shrub-circled opening about the fountain, pointed to the circular body of water at her feet.

"See, Philosopher, how it shines, like a fallen moon! And Philosopher, look at the Fairy of the Fountain!"

And the Philosopher raised his eyes to the fountain to behold the exquisitely poised figure, eager for flight, and flashing wings of radiant water.

"The Fairy, Philosopher, the Fairy!"

The Girl danced around and around,—caught the Philosopher and urged him into some awkward steps in a vain endeavor to keep up with her. In a few moments he sank exhausted on a near-by stone bench, panting and watching the irrepressible girl flitting here and there about the lawn. In a minute she called, "Philosopher, you talk with the Fairy of the Fountain while I gather some rose-buds beyond the big hedge."

With her words the Girl was gone and the Philosopher sat stolidly watching the fountain.

"Strange," he thought, "that so beautiful a thing should be so instinct with form and grace of life, and yet inanimate; so eager for flight, and yet stationary; so ready for speech and yet dumb."

"Philosopher." The word came bell-like through the air. The Philosopher looked sharply about.

"Humph," he said, "I thought the Girl had gone for roses."

"So she has," the voice returned, "and while she's away I want to speak to you a minute. No, here, *I'm* speaking, the Fairy, the Fairy of the Fountain."

"What?" ejaculated the Philosopher, stroking his close-clipt moustache excitedly. "Did you speak, F-Fairy?"

"Of course. Now listen, for my words are of



much moment," and so saying the Fairy suddenly sat down on her pedestal, shifted her watery wings somewhat, and putting her elbow on her knee and her chin on her hand, eyed the Philosopher thoughtfully.

"Philosopher, what is your business?" she asked.

"To think things through, I suppose," the Philosopher answered after recovering himself.

"Did you ever arrive at a conclusion or conviction that has stood by you through thick and thin?"

"No,—but I have demolished conclusions and convictions of other people that have stood by *them* through thick and thin," the Philosopher replied.

"You are a naughty man," said the Fairy, "but I won't ask you any more such questions. This conversation is becoming too abstract. I hate abstractions. . . . I hate you."

"I'm sorry," the Philosopher said. "Why?"

"Because you are an abstraction and have to do with abstractions only. Why don't you do something worth while? Why don't you count the colors in the rainbow, or look for four-leaf clovers, or stamp white horses, or—"

"Because I'm not a child," the Philosopher interrupted.

"Certainly you are, though you don't know it perhaps. What is, or who is, a child? A child is one who wonders."

"Why—that's right; but that's philosophy. Plato said philosophy is wonder. Do you think he was a child?"

"In a way," the Fairy decided judiciously, "only he didn't use much discretion. A child is one who wonders with discretion. Plato stirred things up. But no—that's wrong. You are a child; so was Plato, so is everyone. Only you are in your second childhood. A true child wonders at the immediate and you at the remote. You are a child thirty-two times removed from yourself. A child wonders at an orange, or a rhinoceros, or a picture, or a four-poster bed. You push things way off—and then wonder about them. First Causes you call them, and Freedom, Truth, Necessity, and God. Yes, you are only a child."

"Perhaps there's something in what you say—a modicum of truth. But look here," and the Philosopher eyed the Fairy sharply, "from the way you spoke of God you can't believe in Him. You must be an atheist."

"No, I am a Fairy." She mused a moment and then said slowly, "There are Gods, anyway. But stop. You're making me talk abstractions. I hate abstractions."

"So do I, sometimes," the Philosopher confessed, and bent his head thoughtfully. The Fairy broke in on his thinking.

"Philosopher, why don't you do something useful,—follow a rainbow, hunt four-leaf clovers, watch a sunset, or something like that?"

"I often watch sunsets," the Philosopher offered.

"But do you see them?"

"Why, of course," the Philosopher answered, raising his eyebrows to look at her in a puzzled fashion.

"Philosopher, I don't believe you," the Fairy stated decisively, "*I don't believe you.*"

"Why," the Philosopher expostulated, "every day in the year I've—"

"No, you haven't," retorted the Fairy. "You've seen some patches of red in the west, or some golden spots there, but I'll wager you've never seen a sunset. Have you seen the day grow tired, Philosopher, and a band of clearing blue border the eastern line of the horizon? Have you watched the mother of the colors stretch her arms after the sun has gone down? Why, she circles half the horizon with her great golden arms; and in the central horizon to the west her ample bosom burns so softly and so splendidly, robed in purest sheens of rose-flame, and her arms,—from her arms flow fold on fold of silky flame, fiery orange and living yellow. And the red that all day danced so bravely in the rose, begins to droop, to droop and to listen to the calling of her mother, and slowly goes to her; and the blue that all day flushed the sky, that drowsed among far hills, and napped within the violet, begins to wake a little, lazy old blue that he is, to rub his eyes, and then he too begins to loiter along towards his mother. And the green that greeted everything so gladly in the trees, and in the multitudinous forests of the grasses, follows the red and blue, hand in hand, then breaks from them and

runs so swiftly to the mother. And the yellow of the buttercups and dandelions has long since gone; all of them but laggard blue, and finally he goes too. And the mother of the colors, radiantly and blindingly happy, gathers them all to her mothering breast, and step by step retires below the horizontal hills. Have you seen all this, Philosopher?"

"No."

"Then you have never seen a sunset."

"I fear not," said the Philosopher; then added in haste, "But, Fairy, where is the Girl? She was here but a minute ago and went for flowers. I must look for her."

"Philosopher, there is no Girl. That was only the incorrigible child in you that led you on."

"Oh."

"Philosopher, what are you thinking of?"

"Of you, and fairies. You are very beautiful."

"O Oberon! Do even Philosophers flatter? But of course, you are a man."

"Perhaps, but I also search for truth, and it is true that you are beautiful," the Philosopher insisted.

"What is beauty?" the Fairy asked quickly.

"It is—it is—it is—I don't know," he finished. "Do you?"

"Of course, being a Fairy."

"Well, what is it?"

"Beauty—beauty is a dream of love that is to be."

"And how does your being a Fairy insure your knowledge of what beauty is?"

"That is simply because I am a Fairy."

"But what on earth is a Fairy?"

"A Fairy is one who does not have to search for beauty."

"Is there any difference between just beauty and perfect beauty?"

"Decidedly," the Fairy said. "Perfect beauty is a dream of love that can be no more."

"And can a Fairy always see that without search?"

"No, Philosopher, perfect beauty is reserved for Gods; only Gods find it at hand."

"But Fairy, what are Gods?"

"A God, Philosopher, is a Fairy who can forever live in the presence of perfect beauty."

"And perfect beauty is a dream of love that can be no more, and only Gods can forever live with it," the Philosopher mused. "The Gods must be sad, Fairy?"

"They *are* sad, Philosopher," the Fairy answered softly, "but they are still Gods."

Several minutes passed, the Philosopher resting his tired head in his hands, absorbed in thought. The Fairy shook her wings of water and then turned to admire as she gently moved them. The moonlight was paling and the air was more misty, while clouds were more closely linked, and larger. At last the Philosopher raised his head.

"Fairy," he asked huskily, "can dreams come true?"

"No, Philosopher, for if they came true they would have been but plans whereby to build. No, dreams can never come true. That is what makes them dreams."

"But Fairy, I always thought that Fairyland was a dream, a dream of childhood,—and yet you prove it to be true?"

"By all means; Fairyland is the one established fact in the universe."

"Where is it, and what must I do to find and enter it?"

"It is everywhere. To find and enter it you must be born again and become as a child. You must forget everything but things."

"That, Fairy, I fear, is an abstraction."

"No, it is the truth. I hate abstractions."

"*So do I*," the Philosopher emphatically affirmed. As he spoke he shuddered violently, and opened and clenched his hands convulsively. "But Fairy, what's the matter? Where am I? A little while ago I was comfortably seated in my library in my easy chair before the fire. Did I doze off, and is this a dream?"

"Foolish man," the Fairy replied as she arose, shook her wings of radiant water, and resumed her former position, eager for flight, "foolish man, for the first time in your life, you are awake."



## The Midland Library

*Chats on Japanese Prints*, by Arthur Davison Ficke (Frederick A. Stokes Co.), is pronounced by competent authority to be "the best book about Japanese prints that has yet been written." It will be most gratefully received by the widening circle of lovers of Japanese art.

Berton Braley in his own life has tasted the grain and flavor of the realities whereof he writes in his *Songs of the Workaday World* (George H. Doran Co.). He has gained an insight into "the workaday world" which enables him to sing faithfully enough of many occupations which his own experience has not encompassed. We say "sing", and he does sing, in free, galloping verse, yet not with the force and art of Kipling, nor the vigor of Service. Many, very many, of his expressions are trite, and not many of his verses rank above good newspaper "stuff", while others are so clever and contagious that too much credit is likely to be given him. His sincerity cannot be questioned, however, and he has certainly shown the possibilities of the workaday world of which he sings so boldly. He gives new view-points in many cases, as in *The Forest Ranger*, in which the ranger is seen, not in the expected and affected adoration of his forests and his rough life, but longing for an evening in stiff evening dress. The best poems in the book are *Ready*, dealing with the "Panama Gang" in a rollicking bravado, and *To a Photographer*, which strikes a sincere note that should be heeded not alone by photographers.



## The Midland Chronicle

The late autumn number of *The Drama* promises significance. The play in this issue is *Los Interessos Creados*, by Spain's brilliant and popular playwright, Beneventa. An authoritative essay on Beneventa accompanies the play. Another attractive feature is Edward Arlington Robinson's poem, *Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford*. Those who know Mr. Robinson's fine, thoughtful work will be interested by this beautiful, simple, and human presentation. More notable still is Rabindranath Tagore's essay on *The Stage*. The remaining articles are well worth the attention of anyone interested in the drama.

With the October number *Poetry* begins its fourth year of labor in its pioneer field. Carl Sandburg's contributions, *Days*, are refreshing reading in the midst of the many puerile vacuities now perpetrated under the guise of *vers libre*. Some of these pieces are rather slight things, but the imagery in the *Sketch* and the *Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard*, and the tragic intensity in *Killers*, are not soon forgotten. *The Scarlet Thread* is a thoughtful piece of work by a new contributor to the magazine, Charles Hamilton Musgrove. Of peculiar interest are the translations of *Slavic Songs* by Florence Randal Livesay, who has made a special study of the folk-song of the Ukraine region.



